MARVEL

#10

Steve Rogers CAPTAIN AMERICA®

SPENCER • SAIZ • STEIN • BRANDT • LIBRANDA • ROSENBERG

Super-Soldier. Avenger. Agent of Hydra. He is...

Steve Rogers
CAPTAIN AMERICA

Steve Rogers' reality has been secretly rewritten by Kobik, a sentient Cosmic Cube acting under the influence of the Red Skull. In Steve's new history, a Hydra agent took Steve from his mother and enrolled him in a school where he was trained to believe in Hydra's ideals. His strength of character caught the eye of Hydra's leadership, and they recruited him for a secret mission: Return to the U.S. during World War II to assassinate Dr. Abraham Erskine, the man who would invent the Super-Soldier Serum.

In the present, S.H.I.E.L.D. Director Maria Hill is facing a tribunal for her crimes. Steve publicly advocated for his partner, Sharon Carter, to replace Hill as head of S.H.I.E.L.D., and let a World Security Councilmember die to swing the verdict in their favor. In a last-minute gamble, Hill proposed a technological shield that would protect Earth from any extraterrestrial threat--but will it be enough to protect her from the consequences of her actions?

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NEW YORK CITY.
1940.

Dear Helmut,

Things could not be going worse.

Every week I go to the pictures, and watch the newsreels about the war effort.

I want to do everything I can to help--

--but so far I am doing nothing but failing.

My mission is to get close to Doctor Abraham Erskine--but how can I, when every day I'm rejected by the Army's doctors?

It's forced me to come up with a new plan--

--washing dishes.

My reconnaissance showed that Erskine sometimes comes to this diner with General Phillips for an early morning breakfast--giving me an outside chance--

--to do what's necessary.

I--I CAN GET THESE TWO, ANNIE...I KNOW YOU HAVE A LOT OF TABLES--

AW, THANKS, STEVIE--YOU FELLAS ARE IN GREAT HANDS WITH THIS ONE!

WHAT CAN I GET YOU GENTLEMEN?

AH--YES, I'LL HAVE THE FULL BREAKFAST WITH--

HEY-- WAIT A SECOND--

I KNOW YOU.

S-SORRY?

IT **IS** YOU! YOU'RE THE KID WHO KEEPS COMING TO THE **RECRUITMENT STATION**--

I THINK YOU MEAN I'M THE KID YOU KEEP **TURNING AWAY** AT THE RECRUITMENT STATION, SIR.

STEVE. STEVE **ROGERS,** SIR.

ERSKINE-- THIS YOUNG MAN--WHAT'S YOUR NAME AGAIN?

STEVE HERE HAS SET AN HONEST-TO-GOD **RECORD.** HE'S IN LINE EVERY MORNING, BRIGHT AND EARLY, TRYING TO ENLIST. TRYING TO CONVINCE EVERY DOCTOR WE'VE EVER HAD NOT TO STAMP HIM **4-F.**

AH! THAT IS QUITE INTERESTING! I MUST HEAR ALL ABOUT IT--BUT FIRST--

--SOME FRESH COFFEE, YES? TWO SUGARS.

S.H.I.E.L.D. HELICARRIER ILIAD. NOW.

GUILTY.

THIS COUNCIL FINDS MARIA HILL GUILTY ON ALL COUNTS.

AGENTS, PLEASE ESCORT HER OFF THE HELICARRIER AT ONCE, AS SHE IS HEREBY OFFICIALLY REMOVED FROM DUTY.

AND WITH THAT UNFORTUNATE BUSINESS BEHIND US, THIS TRIBUNAL IS *ADJOURNED.*

AH--CAPTAIN ROGERS-- WOULD YOU MIND STAYING A MOMENT?

WE WERE WONDERING IF YOU MIGHT BE WILLING TO SPEAK A LITTLE MORE ON YOUR RECOMMENDATION TO FILL THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR--I SUSPECT WE ALL KNOW THE ANSWER, BUT STILL--

--OBVIOUSLY THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT DECISION TO MAKE, AND WHOEVER IT IS WILL BE WORKING VERY CLOSELY WITH YOU, SO IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE BENEFICIAL TO GET YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE MATTER...

ABSOLUTELY, COUNCILMEMBER RENDELL--I BELIEVE THERE'S ONLY ***ONE*** PERSON WHO CAN DO THIS JOB--

"--AND HER NAME IS ***SHARON CARTER.***"

THANK YOU FOR MAKING TIME TO SEE ME, SENATOR TOWNES--

NONSENSE, COMMANDER CARTER, IT'S AN ***HONOR***--AND I DO APOLOGIZE FOR HOW LONG IT'S TAKEN TO GET THIS MEETING ON THE BOOKS. MY DUTIES AS MAJORITY LEADER ARE MAKING MY DAYS AWFULLY LIVELY AROUND HERE--

NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE. BUT WE ARE DOWN TO THE WIRE NOW, SIR--

YES...I UNDERSTAND YOU WANT TO GET YOUR S.H.I.E.L.D. ACT ON THE CALENDAR FOR A FLOOR VOTE.

THE HOUSE HAS ALREADY VOTED, AS YOU KNOW. AND HERE, IT'S PASSED THROUGH COMMITTEE, IT HAS FIFTY-SIX CO-SPONSORS, AND THE PRESIDENT HAS ALREADY INDICATED HE'LL SIGN IT. ALL WE'RE WAITING FOR--

--IS LITTLE OL' ME. I DO UNDERSTAND, COMMANDER. HOWEVER, LET ME EXPLAIN TO YOU HOW THE ***SENATE*** WORKS...

YOU SEE, PRESIDENTS COME AND GO, AND THE HOUSE--LORD BLESS 'EM, THEY ARE AN ***IMPETUOUS BUNCH***.

BUT THE SENATE--OUR ROLE IS TO MAKE SURE THE COUNTRY SLOWS DOWN, TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND CONSIDERS LONG AND HARD HOW WE MOVE THINGS ALONG. TAKE ***YOUR*** BILL, FOR INSTANCE.

YES, IT HAS CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT. BUT BEHIND THAT SUPPORT ARE ***CONCERNS. WHISPERS. FEARS.*** REAL ONES, I MUST SAY.

ON MY LEFT, I'VE GOT MEMBERS WORRIED ABOUT THE SURVEILLANCE MEASURES--WARRANTLESS WIRETAPPING AND DATA COLLECTION ON LEVELS EVEN THE NSA WOULDN'T TOUCH.

AND ON MY RIGHT, PLENTY OF FOLKS ARE SPOOKED ABOUT THE SOVEREIGNTY QUESTION. THIS BILL WOULD ESSENTIALLY TURN OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MILITARY OVER TO S.H.I.E.L.D. IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY--THAT'S A HARD SELL WITH THE "LIVE FREE OR DIE" CROWD.

I UNDERSTAND THOSE CONCERNS, SENATOR--

--NOW ALLOW ME TO SHARE A FEW OF MY OWN. THIS COUNTRY--THIS ***WORLD***--IS UNDER ATTACK. AND THE THREATS ARE DIFFERENT FROM ANYTHING WE'VE EVER FACED BEFORE.

THIS NEW HYDRA IS AN INSIDIOUS CONTAGION--SPREADING A MESSAGE OF HATE TO OUR OWN CITIZENS, TARGETING CIVILIANS WITH UNCONSCIONABLE BRUTALITY.

MEANWHILE, OUR SCIENTISTS ARE WARNING US EVERY DAY OF THE GROWING THREAT OF THIS APPROACHING CHITAURI FLEET, WHICH HAS THE POWER TO WIPE US OUT ***OVERNIGHT***. NOT TO MENTION ALL THE ESCAPED CRIMINALS FROM ***PLEASANT HILL***--

--ALL THIS AT A TIME WHEN FAITH IN LEADERSHIP HAS NEVER BEEN LOWER, OUR INSTITUTIONS ARE CRUMBLING--AND OUR HEROES SEEM CONSUMED WITH FIGHTING EACH OTHER.

I'M DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT OUR ABILITY TO WIN THESE WARS, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY--

--SO IS ***CAPTAIN AMERICA.***

THAT'S RIGHT. AND AS YOU KNOW, HE'S TAKEN THE VERY RARE STEP OF ENDORSING THE S.H.I.E.L.D. ACT. BECAUSE HE BELIEVES IT'S ***ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.***

BUT HERE'S WHAT YOU MAY ***NOT*** BE AWARE OF--HE FEELS SO STRONGLY ABOUT THIS THAT HE'S WILLING TO TAKE THIS EVEN FURTHER IF CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP ISN'T WILLING TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT. SO TELL ME, SENATOR--

--HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOUR MAJORITY WILL LAST IF CAPTAIN AMERICA STARTS ENDORSING CANDIDATES AHEAD OF NEXT YEAR'S PRIMARIES?

COMMANDER CARTER'S WORK AS D.C. LIAISON HAS US ON THE VERGE OF PASSING THE BIGGEST EXPANSION OF S.H.I.E.L.D.'S POWERS IN THE HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION. HER TENURE AS INTERIM SHADOW DIRECTOR DURING HILL'S PROBATION HAS BEEN OPERATIONALLY IMPECCABLE. BOTTOM LINE--

SIR!

--I CAN THINK OF NO ONE BETTER EQUIPPED FOR THE JOB. IF YOU--EXCUSE ME--

APOLOGIES, COUNCILMEMBERS, I'M AFRAID I HAVE TO BE GOING--

"--IT SEEMS OUR BUSINESS MIGHT NOT BE CONCLUDED AFTER ALL."

MARIA HILL
DIRECTOR
ACCESS DENIED
ACCESS GRANTED

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION:

DOCKING STATION TO CAPTAIN MARVEL--WE HAVE A VISITOR REQUESTING PERMISSION TO LAND. IT'S--IT'S MARIA HILL, MA'AM.

WHY ME? WHY IS IT ALWAYS ME?

MA'AM?

-SIGH-

"PERMISSION GRANTED."

THERE BETTER NOT BE A S.H.I.E.L.D. BATTALION FOLLOWING YOU TO MAKE AN ARREST--

ARREST? COME ON, IT WAS AN ***INTERNAL CIVIL TRIBUNAL.*** NOBODY'S GOING TO **JAIL** OR ANYTHING. THINK OF IT AS AN AMICABLE DIVORCE-- ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO FIGURE OUT WHO GETS THE CAT.

BELIEVE ME WHEN I TELL YOU I AM NOT GOING TO WAR AGAIN OVER ***YOU*** OF ALL PEOPLE.

AW, SEE, NOW THAT IS NO WAY TO GREET SOMEONE FROM YOUR LEAN-IN CIRCLE, CAROL--

--ESPECIALLY NOT WHEN I BROUGHT A ***GIFT...***

WE ALL HAVE TO BE READY WHEN WE'RE CALLED UPON--

--EVEN IF WE HAVE NO IDEA WHEN THAT MOMENT WILL COME.

AND THAT REALLY IS THE KEY--

--TO BE READY AT ALL TIMES.

READY TO DO WHAT IS NECESSARY--

--AND READY TO ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES.

HOW COULD YOU BE SO CARELESS?!

I--
FORGIVE ME, SUPREME LEADER--

YOU LET HER **ESCAPE?!** WITH THE PLANS FOR THIS "PLANETARY DEFENSE SHIELD"?! WE **HAD** A **PLAN**--

"--TO USE THE CHITAURI FLEET TO DESTABILIZE WORLD GOVERNMENTS AND CLEAVE THE WORLD FROM ITS SO-CALLED PROTECTORS."

AND NOW OUR ENEMIES HAVE BEEN HANDED THE VERY KEYS TO OUR DEFEAT!

THE SHIELD IS A ***DISTRACTION,*** MY LORD--THERE'S NO WAY THEY CAN MAKE IT OPERATIONAL IN TIME, EVEN IF THEY DID DECIDE TO TRY--IT'S A LOOSE END--

BAH, "LOOSE END"-- YOU SEEM TO HAVE **MANY** OF THOSE, CAPTAIN. TELL ME--WHAT BECAME OF **JACK FLAG,** THE PROTÉGÉ WHO DISCOVERED THE TRUTH OF YOUR LOYALTY TO HYDRA? HM?

I--I'M TAKING CARE OF IT, SIR--

NO. YOU HAVE FAILED TO DO AS YOU WERE ORDERED. YOUR DELAY SPEAKS ONLY TO YOUR **WEAKNESS** AND YOUR **COWARDICE**. SUCH BEHAVIOR WILL FACE STRONG PUNISHMENT WHEN WE MEET AGAIN IN SOKOVIA--

--SO THE TIME LEFT FOR REMEDY IS DWINDLING, YOU MUST UNDERSTAND.

I TOLD YOU WE WOULD NOT SPEAK AGAIN WHILE JACK FLAG STILL DREW BREATH.

DO NOT MAKE A **LIAR** OF ME AGAIN, HERR ROGERS.

THE RED SKULL'S RIGHT, YOU KNOW.

YOU'RE LISTENING IN ON OUR CONVERSATIONS NOW, SELVIG? MAYBE I SHOULD TELL THE SKULL ***YOU'RE*** ANOTHER ONE OF MY "LOOSE ENDS"--

NOW YOU'RE JUST BEING ***PETTY.***

JACK IS IN A COMA. HE'S A NOT A THREAT TO ***ANYONE--***

ON THE CONTRARY-- YOU ASKED ME TO EXAMINE HIS PHYSIOLOGY. I DID.

AND?

AND, WITH HIS ENHANCED HEALING, IT'S ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT HE WILL IN FACT RECOVER AND WAKE UP--

--AND, IN DOING SO, HE CAN ***EXPOSE*** YOU. HE CAN EXPOSE ***EVERYTHING*** YOU HAVE BUILT HERE.

IN AN INSTANT, ALL OF THIS CAN COME CRASHING DOWN. DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?

OF ***COURSE*** I DO, DAMN IT!

JUST... JUST TELL ME WHAT TO DO.

I'VE ALREADY PREPARED JUST THE THING.

A SMALL INJECTION IN HIS I.V. FLUIDS. TIME-RELEASED, UNDETECTABLE, UNTRACEABLE--

"--AND DEADLY."

FRESH POT, COMING UP.

WONDERFUL. NOW TELL ME, YOUNG STEVEN--

--WHAT IS IT THAT *DRIVES* YOU? THIS DETERMINATION TO BECOME A SOLDIER?

THERE'S A *WAR* GOING ON. I WANT TO DO MY PART. I *HAVE* TO DO MY PART.

IT'S A *NICE SENTIMENT,* SON, BUT YOUR PHYSICAL CONDITION, WELL--THERE ARE A LOT OF WAYS YOU CAN HELP THE WAR EFFORT RIGHT HERE AT HOME.

AND TRUST ME, SOMEDAY YOU'LL THANK US FOR SPARING YOU ALL THAT HORROR.

ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, BUT THAT'S BULL.

WHAT KIND OF A MAN WOULD I BE IF I LET MY FRIENDS AND MY BROTHERS FIGHT AND DIE FOR WHAT'S RIGHT, WHILE *I* STAY SAFE AND WARM BACK HERE?

HE HAS A *POINT* THERE, YES?

I'M NOT CRAZY. I KNOW I HAVE-- LIMITATIONS, BUT--

--HAVEN'T YOU EVER WANTED TO BE A PART OF SOMETHING THAT YOU BELIEVED IN--SOMETHING *BIGGER THAN YOURSELF?*

SOMETHING YOU'D DO *ANYTHING* FOR...

AYEEE! STOP! THIEF!

ANNIE? WHAT'S--

THAT MAN! HE--HE STOLE MY PURSE FROM BEHIND THE BAR! IT'S GOT ALL MY TIPS!

DON'T WORRY--

--I'VE GOT HIM.

BEING READY MEANS SEIZING EVERY CHANCE YOU GET--

--TO SHOW WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF.

TO SHOW YOU MEASURE UP.

EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T.

I MAY NOT HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO FULFILL MY MISSION.

I AM JUST ONE MAN--

--AND THE WORLD IS A TERRIFYING PLACE.

BUT I STILL HAVE TO TRY--

--NO MATTER WHAT THE COST.

I'M SO SORRY, JACK. YOU DESERVED **BETTER** THAN THIS.

CAP?

CATHY...

I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE--

I'M--I'M SORRY I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO VISIT HIM MORE...

IT'S OKAY. YOU'RE HERE WHEN IT MATTERS THE MOST. BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW?

KNOW WHAT?

THAT WE-- YOU MEAN, YOU ***DIDN'T*** KNOW? I--I JUST TALKED TO THE DOCTORS--

--WE'VE DECIDED TO TURN OFF HIS MACHINES.

OH MY GOD. CATH-- ARE YOU--ARE YOU SURE?

CAN YOU BELIEVE HE LEFT THIS UP TO ***ME*** IN HIS PAPERWORK? HIS FAMILY IS ***FURIOUS***--

YOU WERE HIS ***PARTNER***. HE TRUSTED YOU WITH HIS LIFE.

THE DOCTORS SAY HE'S GONE. HE'S NOT EVEN IN THERE. AND THAT EVEN IF SOME MIRACLE WERE TO HAPPEN--THE DAMAGE THAT'S BEEN DONE...

I JUST KEPT THINKING BACK TO WHEN HE LOST HIS LEGS...

HE'D CALL ME AT LIKE TWO, THREE A.M., BEING ALL "CATHY, YOU REMEMBER THAT TIME WE WERE FIGHTING THE SERPENTS WITH CAP?"

ALL HE EVER WANTED TO BE WAS YOUR NEW ***BUCKY,*** YOU KNOW? I DON'T SAY THAT TO MAKE YOU FEEL BAD--IT'S JUST--I THINK IT WAS TOUGH FOR HIM. TO HAVE IT GET THAT CLOSE AND THEN NOT HAVE IT STICK.

BUT HE GOT BACK UP. HE NEVER STOPPED TRYING-- AND SURE ENOUGH, HE GOT ANOTHER CHANCE. AND HE WAS ***SO EXCITED***. TRUTH BE TOLD, I WASN'T EVEN SURE IF I ***SHOULD*** SIGN BACK UP, BUT--HE WOULDN'T LET ME SAY NO...

...AND THAT'S WHAT I KEEP THINKING ABOUT NOW. THAT THIS IS ALL HE EVER WANTED. THIS IS HOW HE'D WANT IT TO END. I MEAN, COME ON--

"--FIGHTING ALONGSIDE CAPTAIN AMERICA-- SACRIFICING HIMSELF TO TAKE DOWN BARON ZEMO--"

--WHAT'S MORE BUCKY THAN ***THAT,*** RIGHT?

"ONE LAST ADVENTURE TO GO ON--

"--ONE LAST GOOD MEMORY TO HOLD ON TO."

--SENATE MAJORITY LEADER KENNETH TOWNES SHOCKED WASHINGTON TODAY BY ABRUPTLY SCHEDULING AN IMMEDIATE FLOOR VOTE ON THE S.H.I.E.L.D. ACT--

--THE BILL THAT WOULD EMPOWER S.H.I.E.L.D. AS AMERICA'S FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE IN CASE OF A TERRORIST ATTACK OR DOOMSDAY EVENT--

IT'S GOOD NEWS--

--WE COULD USE SOME OF THAT RIGHT NOW.

STEVE!

I HEARD ABOUT JACK... I'M SO SORRY. I SHOULD'VE BEEN THERE.

NO-- YOU HAD IMPORTANT WORK TO DO--

--AND IT SOUNDS LIKE IT WAS A SUCCESS.

THE BILL IS EXPECTED TO PASS WITH OVERWHELMING BIPARTISAN SUPPORT--

IT WAS TOUCH AND GO FOR A BIT, BUT YEAH, WE GOT THE JOB DONE--

--YOU'RE A VERY CONVENIENT NAME-DROP, ROGERS.

YOU'RE GIVING ME TOO MUCH CREDIT. THIS WAS ***YOUR*** WIN. YOU DESERVE ALL THE CREDIT. AND ALL THE REWARD. SPEAKING OF--

SO IMPATIENT. BEFORE YOU ASK--YES, COUNCILMEMBER RENDELL DID CALL.

AND?

AND...

...THEY OFFERED ME THE *DIRECTOR'S* JOB.

SHARON! THAT'S *INCREDIBLE*. YOU'RE GOING TO DO AN AMAZING JOB.

YEAH, I PROBABLY WOULD'VE--

--IF I HADN'T TURNED THEM DOWN.

WHAT?!

TRUTH IS, PEOPLE ARE *RIGHT* TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THIS S.H.I.E.L.D. ACT--THIS AMOUNT OF POWER, THIS KIND OF AUTHORITY, THE CHANCE IT COULD BE ABUSED--IT'S *TERRIFYING*.

IF WE'RE GOING TO DO THIS, THE PERSON LEADING US HAS TO BE SOMEONE *EVERYONE* CAN TRUST, SOMEONE WE ALL KNOW WILL ONLY DO WHAT'S *ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY* TO KEEP US SAFE--

--IT HAS TO BE *YOU*, STEVE.

WE NEED *YOU* TO BE THE NEXT DIRECTOR OF S.H.I.E.L.D.

LIKE I SAID, WE NEVER KNOW WHEN WE'LL BE CALLED UPON--

--WHAT MATTERS IS THAT WE'RE READY.

STEVE!

WHAT HAPPENED?!

HE-- HE GOT AWAY...

I GOT YOUR BAG BACK, THOUGH.

GENERAL-- THIS IS HIM.

SORRY?

THE SUBJECT, FOR OUR EXPERIMENT--LOOK AT THIS--***THIS*** IS WHO WE NEED. SOMEONE WITH THIS KIND OF STRENGTH.

ERSKINE, YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS--

GENERAL PHILLIPS, I HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE SURE OF ANYTHING IN MY LIFE.

SIRS--IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, SON. YOU PUT SOME ICE ON THAT AND GET PLENTY OF REST. I EXPECT TO SEE YOU IN THAT LINE FIRST THING TOMORROW MORNING.

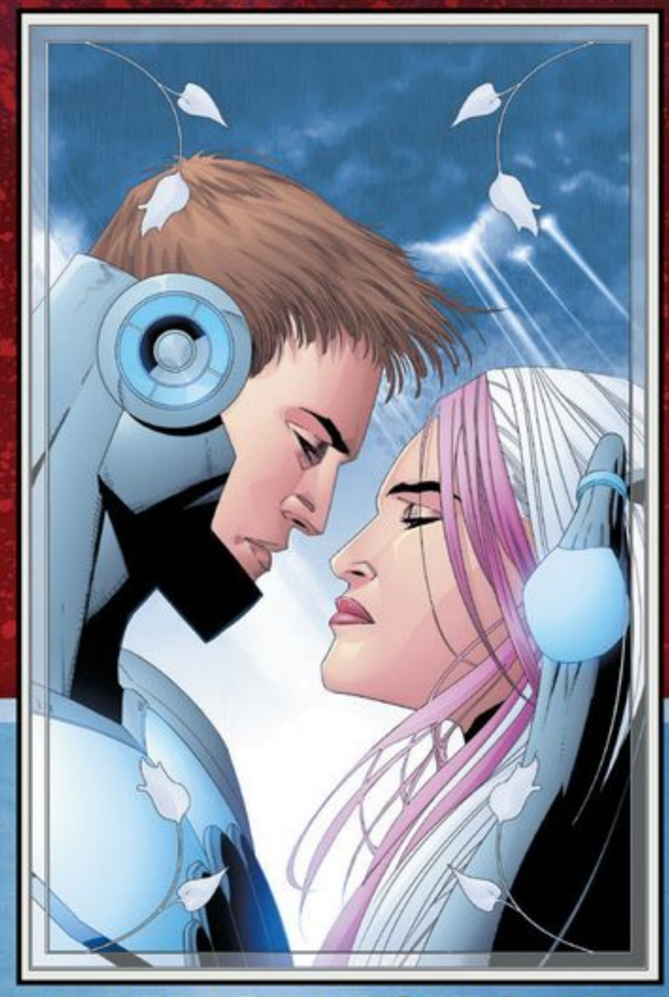
GENERAL?

BRIGHT AND EARLY, ROGERS--

--SOMETHING TELLS ME YOU'RE ABOUT TO HAVE A ***VERY*** BIG DAY.

NEXT

THE STORY EXPANDS IN



THUNDERBOLTS #9

UNCANNY AVENGERS #20

ZONE